DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 087 943 CE 001 064

AUTHOR Otte, Elroy; Webb, Earl S.
TITLE Factors Affecting the Educational and Career Choices of Agricultural Education Graduates at Texas A and M University, 1960-1964.
INSTITUTION Texas A and M Univ., College Station. Dept. of Agricultural Education.
PUB DATE Feb 70
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50
DESCRIPTORS *Agricultural Education; College Graduates; Curriculum Development; *Curriculum Evaluation; Educational Research; Followup Studies; *Graduate Surveys; Placement; Teacher Education; *Teacher Education Curriculum

ABSTRACT

The study had three purposes: to obtain information concerning the careers of graduates of the Department of Agricultural Education at Texas A and M to be utilized in counseling, to obtain information pertinent to curriculum improvement, and to provide information for improving placement services. Data from a questionnaire sent to 208 former students and an information sheet with data from the files of the Office of the Associate Dean for Instruction, College of Agriculture, determined that most graduates chose Texas A and M because of the academic standards and were influenced by teachers of vocational agriculture in their choice of college and major field. Most of the graduates had agriculture backgrounds, and 27.6 percent entered vocational agriculture teaching as their employment. At the time of the study, 23.7 percent were still teaching vocational agriculture, but governmental service replaced teaching of other subjects as the second-largest area of employment. The inability to find a teaching position led 32.8 percent to enter other professions. Median salary ranged from $5,136 at first employment to $8,852 at the time of the study. Adding business management courses to the curriculum was suggested by 77.5 percent. Seventy-three percent said student teaching had helped them in their present occupation. (AG)

ED 087943

A REPORT OF RESEARCH

FACTORS AFFECTING THE EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION GRADUATES AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY, 1960-1964

Elroy Otte and Earl S. Webb

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

February, 1970

CE 001 069

Texas A&M University
College Of Agriculture
College Of Education

DEPARTMENT Of
AGRICULTURAL
EDUCATION

COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS 77843

PREFACE

Teacher educators in agriculture have always been concerned about the quality of the curricular experiences designed to prepare persons as teachers. The need for concern, however, is much greater now than in the past because of the rapidly changing conditions in agriculture due to increased technology, changing economic conditions, restructuring of social patterns, and redefining of the term agriculture to include business and industry that is directly involved in servicing farmers and ranchers.

The major responsibility of teacher educators in agriculture is to prepare persons to become teachers of vocational agriculture. This task has now become extremely complex because of the nature of today's agriculture and emerging programs in schools. What should be the breadth and depth of curricular experiences that will enable a person to develop an educational program satisfactorily?

Another area of concern in curricular planning is the demand by industry and business for agricultural education graduates. What curricular experiences should be provided to enable a person to choose from a wide range of professional opportunities?

The research reported in this publication attempted to find the answers to many of the questions confronting personnel in the Department of Agricultural Education at Texas A&M University. It is believed that former students are the best sources of information about adjustment that may be needed in teacher education programs. Curricular experiences received by them while in college have been evaluated in the field of experience.

Dr. Otte was responsible for the major portion of the research. He is currently the dean of vocational education at Lamar State College of Technology, Beaumont, Texas. During his tenure as a teacher of vocational agriculture, he initiated several new programs and innovations that proved to be successful.

Earl S. Webb, Professor
Agricultural Education
February, 1970

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to obtain information concerning the careers of graduates of the Department of Agricultural Education at Texas A&M University to the end that bases could be found for counseling students and prospective students. A second purpose was to provide information that could lead to improvement in the curriculum. A third purpose was to provide information for improving the placement services. The following specific objectives served as guidelines for implementing the study:

1. To determine factors that influenced graduates to select agricultural education as a college major at Texas A&M University.

2. To determine the occupational status of agricultural education graduates.

3. To determine the perception of curricular experiences of agricultural education graduates in retrospect.

4. To develop recommendations for adjustments in the placement services, in counseling procedures, and in curricular requirements.

Procedure

Data were obtained from the following sources: (1) permanent records on file in the Office of the Associate Dean for Instruction, College of Agriculture, and (2) from agricultural education graduates for the years 1960-1964.

Two instruments, an information sheet and a questionnaire, were developed to obtain data. The information sheet was used to collect data from the files, and the questionnaire was mailed to 208 former students who majored in agricultural education. Questionnaires were received from 156 or 75 percent of the graduates. Data were analyzed by appropriate statistical procedures.

Summary of Analysis of Data

1. Academic standards was the factor exerting the most influence upon graduates to choose Texas A&M University. It was named by 32.2 percent of the respondents. Other factors were, in descending order of influence, curricular offerings, cost of attending college, Corps of Cadets (ROTC), nearness to home, and all male student body. These were named by 29.7 percent, 12.9 percent, 7.1 percent, 5.2 percent, and 1.9 percent, respectively. Eleven percent marked "other factors."

2. Teachers of vocational agriculture were named by 31.9 percent as the persons exerting the most influence upon agricultural education graduates to attend Texas A&M University, friends by 23.4 percent, relatives by 14.9 percent, parents by 11.7 percent, and county agricultural agents by 3.2 percent. Of lesser influence were, in descending order, college faculty members, high school counselors, high school teachers of subjects other than vocational agricultural, and college counselors.

3. Teachers of vocational agriculture were named by 52.4 percent as the persons exerting the most influence in helping respondents select agricultural education as a college major. Friends were given credit by 11.2 percent. Also, in descending order of influence, were college faculty members, parents, college counselors, relatives, county agricultural agents, and high school counselors.

4. Thirty and four-tenths percent of the respondents made the decision to major in agricultural education while still in high school. The decision was made by 11.2 percent between high school and college, by 25.2 percent during the freshman year of college, and by 19.3 percent during the sophomore year. Only 13.9 percent made the change to agricultural education after the sophomore year.

5. Three years of vocational agriculture were completed by 43.7 percent of the respondents, while 30.4 percent completed four years, and 11.9 percent completed two years. Only 2.0 percent completed one year; however, 11.9 percent took no vocational agriculture in high school.

6. Sixty-four and two-tenths percent of the respondents had agricultural backgrounds when they entered college as indicated by the occupations of their parents, 54.5 percent of the respondents' parents were farmers or ranchers, whereas 9.7 percent were employed in off-farm agricultural occupations. Conversely, 35.8 percent of the respondents' parents were employed in non-agricultural occupations.

7. An examination of the first employment after graduation shows that 27.6 percent entered vocational agriculture teaching. The second largest group, 22.4 percent, became high school teachers of subjects other than vocational agriculture, followed closely by governmental employees with 22.1 percent. Entering military service were 9.6 percent, 5.1 percent entered sales-service, and 4.5 percent entered banking-finance. Three and two-tenths percent entered farming or ranching, and 1.9 percent entered graduate college. Also, 3.2 percent entered various occupations grouped under "miscellaneous."

8. When occupations of graduates were examined at the time of the study, the largest group, 23.7 percent, was still teaching vocational agriculture; however, employment in an occupation in governmental service had moved into second place with 18.6 percent. In third place was sales-service with 14.7 percent, while high school teachers of subjects other than vocational agriculture had moved into fourth place with 12.2 percent. Seven and seven-tenths percent were in banking-finance, 5.8 percent were in graduate college, and 5.1 percent were in farming or ranching. The smallest occupational group was in military service with only 3.8 percent. The balance of the graduates, 8.3 percent, were in miscellaneous occupations.

9. Of the various methods used to find their first employment, 29.8 percent of the respondents made inquiry directly to the employer. The placement service of the Department of Agricultural Education helped 27.9

percent. Additional means respondents used to contact their first employers were, in descending order of importance, friends, military service, University Placement Office, state-federal employment agencies, and advertisements in news media.

10. Of those that changed occupations or who stayed in the same occupation but changed locations, 31.8 percent made inquiry directly to the employer. The employer made the initial contact in 17.5 percent of the cases, and friends helped 15.6 percent. Other means used by the group were, in descending order, placement service of the Department of Agricultural Education, advertisements in news media, University Placement Office, military service, and state-federal employment agencies.

11. The study revealed that 33.8 percent of the respondents had had only one employer, 40.2 percent two different employers, 19.5 percent three different employers, and 6.5 percent had had four different employers.

12. One hundred and nineteen respondents were not teaching vocational agriculture at the time of the study. Of these, 32.8 percent made the decision to enter another profession when they could not find employment as a teacher of vocational agriculture upon graduation, and 12.6 percent decided to enter another profession while teaching vocational agriculture. Eight and four-tenths percent decided against teaching as a career after completing student teaching but before graduation, and 7.6 percent never intended to teach vocational agriculture. Other respondents made the decision not to teach,

in descending order, while in military service, while attending graduate college, while involved in student teaching, and prior to their student teaching experiences.

13. The four factors that had the most influence upon respondents in selecting the occupation in which they were employed at the time of the study were, in descending order of influence, working with people, opportunity to apply decision making abilities, opportunity for advancement, and salary. The four least influential were, in descending order of influence, health, opportunity to live near close relatives, recreational facilities in the vicinity, and educational facilities in the vicinity.

14. In their first occupation after graduation, respondents earned a median salary of $5,136. Teachers of vocational agriculture earned a median salary of $5,580 followed by governmental and banking-finance employees at $5,167 each. Median salaries of other occupational areas were, in descending order, sales-service $4,833, farmers-ranchers $4,500, teachers of subjects other than vocational agriculture $4,481, and military service $4,333. The median for miscellaneous occupations was $9,500.

15. The median salary earned by respondents in the occupation in which they were engaged at the time of the study was $8,852. Farmers-ranchers earned the highest median salary of any occupational group with $13,750 followed by military service with $10,375. Government service was third with $10,143 followed by banking-finance and sales-service having

median salaries of $9,500 each. Teachers of vocational agriculture had median salaries of $7,800, and high school teachers of subjects other than vocational agriculture earned a median salary of $7,312. The miscellaneous group received a median salary of $10,600.

16. In their first occupation after graduation, respondents who graduated in January earned a median salary of $5,500, whereas May and August graduates earned $4,926 and $5,222, respectively. Earnings at the time of the study showed that January graduates earned a median salary of $10,000 compared to $8,833 earned by May graduates. August graduates earned a median salary of $7,909.

17. At the time of the study the median salary of the 40.4 percent of the respondents having had military experience was $10,178 compared to $8,294 for those respondents not having had military experience.

18. A comparison of salaries earned by respondents at the time of the study and the grade point ratios earned while in college shows that those with grade point ratios between 2.000 and 2.499 (three-point system) earned median annual salaries of $9,667 compared to $9,000 earned by respondents with grade point ratios of 2.500 and up. Those with grade point ratios between 1.500 and 1.999 earned annual salaries of $8,818, and those who had grade point ratios between 1.000 and 1.499 earned $7,409 annual gross salaries.

19. Fifty-five and one-tenth percent of the respondents had attended college after receiving the baccalaureate degree. They attended 41 different colleges and universities, earned four baccalaureate degrees in other disciplines, two doctor of veterinary medicine degrees, 26 master's degrees, and six doctor of philosophy degrees.

20. Fifty-one and seven-tenths percent of the respondents indicated they would major in agricultural education again if they were to repeat their college work. However, 30.2 percent indicated they would select some other major, and 18.1 percent were undecided.

21. When asked if they would recommend a major in agricultural education to a high school senior, 66.2 percent indicated that they would, whereas 15.2 percent would not, and 18.6 percent were undecided.

22. Fifty-seven and seven-tenths percent of the respondents would recommend to high school seniors that they try Corps of Cadets to see if they liked it. An additional 24.4 percent would recommend that students sign a contract for a commission after two years in the Corps of Cadets. Only 4.5 percent would recommend that students should not become members of the Corps of Cadets.

23. Thirty-four percent of the respondents were never in the Corps of Cadets, and 7.7 percent held membership in the Corps of Cadets for less than one year. Five and eight-tenths percent were members for only one year, 23.1 percent were members for two years, and 3.8 percent for

three years. Remaining in the Corps of Cadets for four years were 25.6 percent of the respondents; however, only 17.3 percent received commissions.

24. Of the 23 courses or course areas which graduates were requested to evaluate, 77.5 percent indicated that business management courses should be added to the agricultural education curriculum. Other courses receiving votes for an increase or additions were agricultural economics by 45.9 percent, animal science by 41.5 percent, range science by 41 percent, technical writing by 34.3 percent, agricultural engineering by 34.2 percent, agronomy by 33.6 percent, entomology by 33.1 percent, speech by 32.6 percent, and horticulture by 31.5 percent. Courses which respondents indicated should not be added or that should be decreased were philosophy by 40.9 percent, physics by 24.3 percent, wildlife science by 23.4 percent, chemistry by 22.7 percent, sociology by 22.5 percent, psychology by 21.5 percent, and agricultural education by 20.1 percent.

25. Ninety-four and one-tenth percent of the respondents had been members of the Texas A&M University Collegiate FFA Chapter; however, 40 percent of those who were members said that participation had not helped them in their employment, 39.3 percent said that it had benefited them, and 20.7 percent were undecided.

26. When the respondents were asked if student teaching had helped them in their "present" occupation, 73 percent answered affirmatively, 16.4 percent answered negatively, and 10.6 percent were undecided.

Twenty-three and two-tenths percent recommended more time for student teaching, 4.2 percent recommended less time, and 72.4 percent indicated that the time they had spent in student teaching was about right.

Implications

Based upon the findings of this study, the following implications seem to be justified:

1. Agricultural education majors should be encouraged to make the fullest practical use of the University Counseling and Testing Center and other appropriate sources in identifying the occupational area in which they would be most satisfied at the earliest possible time in their educational careers.

2. Personnel should be assigned to staff the Agricultural Education Department's placement services who have prospect of tenure of such duration that a high degree of rapport may be developed with public school personnel in addition to teachers of vocational agriculture to the end that both the selection of prospective students and the placement of graduates may be enhanced.

3. Rapport should be developed and maintained with the University Placement Office to the end that graduates not wanting to become teachers of vocational agriculture or those wanting to leave the teaching profession would have an increased opportunity of finding satisfactory employment.

4. The agricultural education degree program should be so modified that students may either select an option that will prepare them for entry into any one of the several developing specialized areas, such as farm machinery, horticulture, and extension education or have ample free electives for becoming qualified in an area in which they wish to seek employment.